

A Practice Guide for Youth Coaches

While most coaches recognize the key role they play in promoting youth development, fewer than one-third of coaches have received training in how to do so. To close that gap, partners of the **Million Coaches Challenge** have trained one million coaches in youth development practices. The **MCC Practice Guide for Youth Coaches** identifies **12 core practices** and provides coaches with practical and actionable strategies that they can use, no matter the sport, age of their athletes, or experience level. This mini-guide is focused on the sixth core practice of creating a mastery climate.



What It Is and Why It Matters

Great coaching goes beyond winning, although competition is a part of sports. A mastery climate is one where effort, improvement, and learning take center stage. Coaches celebrate persistence, treat mistakes as opportunities, and help athletes set meaningful goals and reflect on their growth. When athletes believe effort—not talent—drives success, they develop a growth mindset that builds resilience, motivation, and confidence. This approach helps young people find joy and purpose in giving their best, not just in the scoreboard outcome.



What It Looks Like In Practice

FOCUSING ON EFFORT

- Notice and celebrate effort and hustle separately from outcomes.
- Celebrate different types of contributions.
- Give effort-based feedback, like celebrating trying.
- Celebrate mistakes as learning opportunities.

FOCUSING ON IMPROVEMENT AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Set goals with athletes that focus on individual improvement.
- Emphasize success as being better today than yesterday.
- Celebrate and call out growth, reminding athletes how they improved.
- Give intentional praise that addresses something an athlete has control over.

Quick Tips from MCC Partners



From Girls on the Run International:

- ➔ Help your team set goals focused on individual improvement instead of comparison to others
- ➔ Remind participants how they grew or improved.
- ➔ Ask 'How did you do that?' to reflect on effort and skill-building. Help participants identify something specific that contributed to their success.
- ➔ Use TLC Praise: TLC praise is a great way to let team members know what they're doing right. It's important to praise actions such as effort, improvement, and character that are specific to the actions being demonstrated. This is more impactful than just saying, "good job!"
 - Tell it: "You invited Jamie to join when she was alone."
 - Label it: "That shows kindness."
 - Celebrate it: "Awesome job including others!"



Explore the full Million Coaches Challenge Practice Guide for more strategies, examples, and coach tips on bringing these practices to life.